

'I said you don't
need my voice girl you
have your own'

-t.amos

Write!

Gabriela

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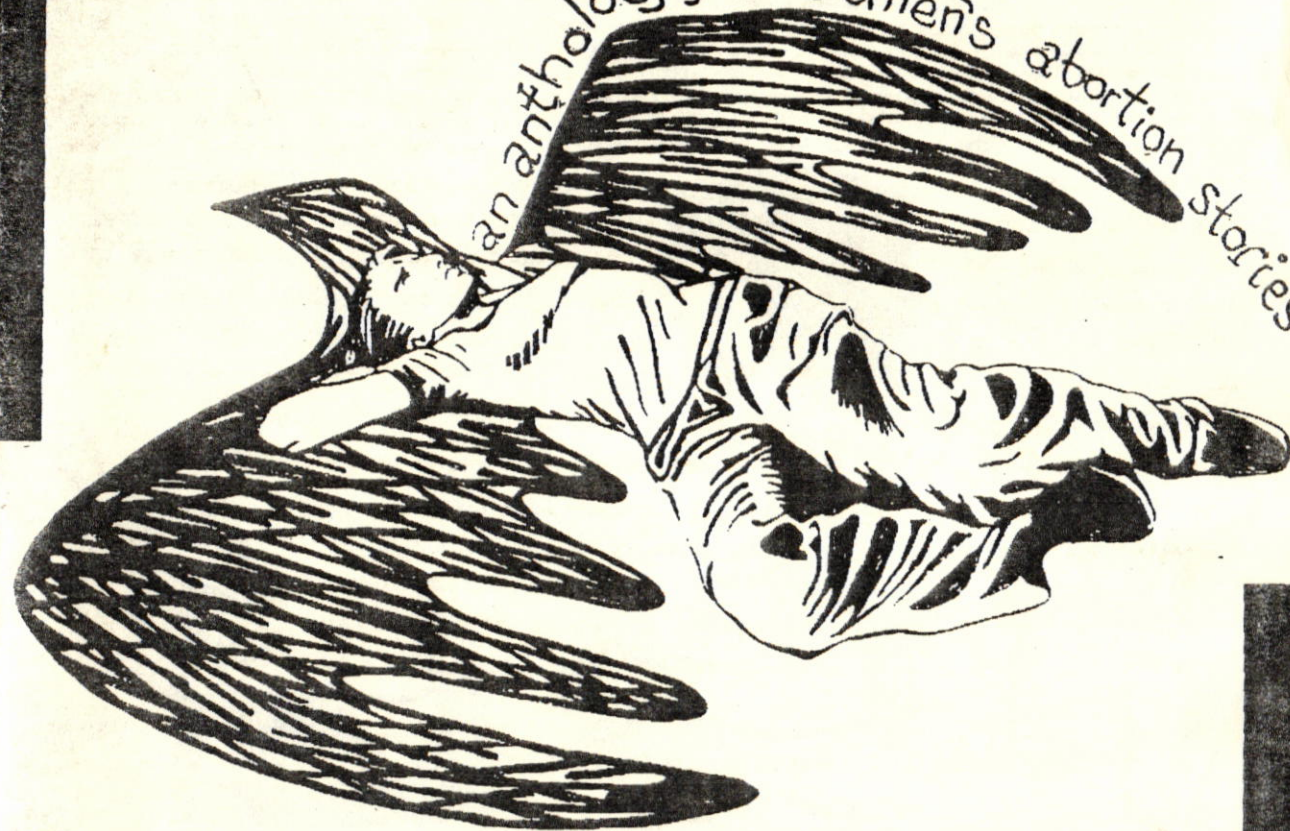
Vancouver B.C.

V5N 4A5

Canada

THIS IS ME

an anthology of women's abortion stories



USING MY CHOICE

About a year ago I got a flyer in the mail somehow. A crude drawing of a woman on it, with a thought bubble, she's thinking 'oh shit, shit, fuck fuck i'm pregnant, fuck'. below that it said it was an ad for a zine on women's abortion stories. i was struck at the idea, instantly knowing it would be an awesome zine, then thinking that i wished i had something to contribute. but then...did i? i was so scared at the idea of abortion, that in my life i might go through one, part of me wasn't sure i could ever handle something like that. but i was so intrigued. what would it feel like? how would i react? how would an abortion change me?

about 4 months after that point i recalled seeing the flyer. this time i was feeling heavier, my belly slightly expanding at being pregnant, i laughed at the irony of these months previous. after my abortion i had those answers i had been thinking about, i know what it feels like, for me, i remember all my reactions. i am also struck about how lucky i was, my privilege to have some choice (i do not believe we are completely free or have all the choices available to us) over my body, my life, and the life of this other. through going over and over with my story in my head, i came to really desire the stories of other women. so alas this zine.

in my enthusiasm i overlooked the fact that abortion is still with such a stigma, that women are still ashamed. the struggle to keep abortion for women, without state or church control, and the struggle to actually have an abortion, is all still so fresh for many women. this zine is my attempt to keep a basic right like joining the fight and safe, and where women may embrace their choices, and no longer live in guilt, fear, or pain. this zine is an attempt to keep history intact, our knowledge by, and for us. it is about our lives.

the honesty of women's stories, our lives, our truths.

playing out in bodies, thought of in our minds, held out by our hands,



i will share my voice, i will share my stories.

INTRODUCTION

please do not hesitate to write:
gabriel June 2003

NEW ADDRESS
PO BOX 21530
1424 COMMERCIAL DR.
VANCOUVER BC
V5L-5G2

BE AWARE!

I'm always accepting submissions for future zines, or projects
Better to send yours in whenever...then never at all!
SEND TO: P.O. Box 21530 1424 Commercial Dr.
Vancouver B.C.
V5L 5G2 Canada
spitboy@hotmail.com

If you want multiple copies of this zine, please contact me!

thank you:

my biggest heartfelt thank you to all the
ladies, girls, women out there who
believed in this project, trusted me with
their histories, who saw the importance.

to the Simon Fraser Public Interest Group (SFPICG!), for contributing
funding, for also seeing the value in all this.

to sarka (sister extraordinaire), for being there before me, and always after,
and forever. to rachel, who thousands of kilometers and countries apart
gave me the best support ever, even through the hardest and lamest of human
technologies (email our only option), despite everything.

to jeff, i couldn't have chosen a better person to be with me, whether riding
bikes, or holding my head in the clinic room, thank you for amazing me again
to the spirit craziness and home of the E.2nd Ave. House, circa Dec. 01 to
spring 03 R.I.P.

and thank you to any one i've talked to about abortion, it means so much to me.
it proves the breaking down of walls.

Check out this zine: "MINE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CHOICE"
an awesome collection of women's abortion stories.
write to Meredith PO Box 19136
PITTSBURGH, PA 15213 USA. merydeath@
hotmail.com. She already has issue
#2 out!

TROY MALISH screened these!
DEREK did the cover lettering!
RACHEL did the cover art!

STAMP OF WOMAN

ON MY BACK



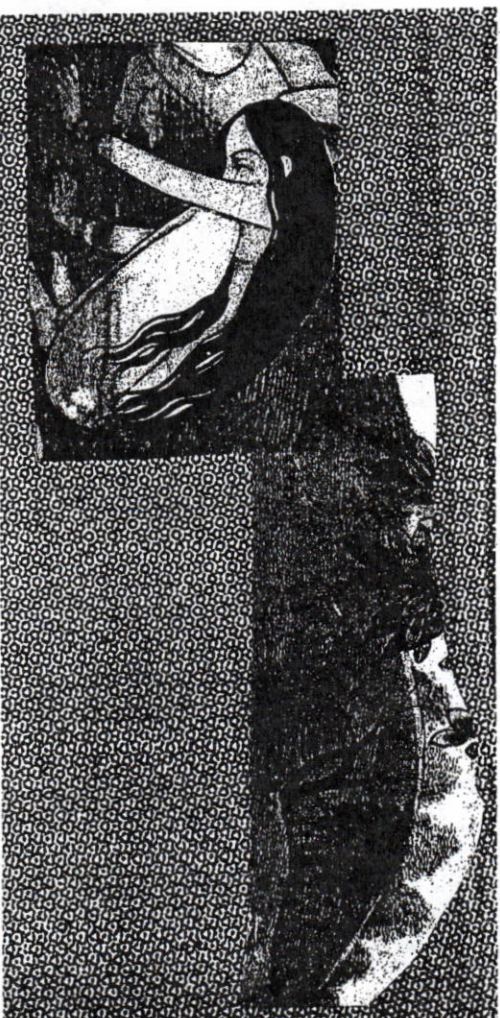


Carnal Testimony

My womb rises to speak; "come down here with me" she says. "There is a dark red world you need to know". This cavern is empty now and wailing. Shedding a lifetime of purpose and will. Feel it sagging like young trees under the weight of coastal snow. A crimson moulting on the inside. Necessary, languid and wanting. She speaks clearly of her commitment and conviction to bear. "Nourish yourself for now" she coos. Next time we'll be sure.

Danielle Arsenault

- 9) talking about abortion, even with people who have had one, even after you lament via zine that you experienced an abortion without being able to experience connecting with someone who's had an abortion, will still be hard, always be hard. eventually, you might want to stop grieving and stop feeling about the whole damn thing so much.



- 10) you'll be stoked to be asked to write an article for an abortion zine but keep pushing it off when you realize you're about to hit the nine month mark since conception. you'll be bombarded with images of yourself in the now, nineteen with six roommates and almost weekly shows in your living room, but nine months bursting pregnant. could you ride your bike that pregnant? would you have stayed in school that semester even though your due date fell in the exam period? how the hell could you play your guitar? would you have quit smoking sooner? the thought of an actual live baby sliding out of your vaginal canal is disturbing to you and this reaffirms your decision, but as your due date comes rushing towards you, you might feel sad again, like a relentless gentle mourning you can't shake off, even though you're happy, even though you can touch a friend's pregnant belly and smile.

other involved seems embarrassed- "what is there to talk about?" like you're crazy for caring, like you shouldn't. not that the choice to have an abortion is really like the sexual abuse of your past, because, fuck, you were just two kids, friends with crushes and tnt beer shared in a porn theatre, but it just feels like another incident of the systematic sexual victimization of woman, because in the end, YOU were the one who got pregnant, YOU were the one left to deal with it.

- 6) you will bleed. thank god this pamphlet is here to tell you this, because no one else will mention it. you will bleed lots and this will be normal, so don't go hysterical when you find that you're passing huge clots you imagine to be chunks of your baby. this will be lots and this will last for two weeks, as you pack up your stuff in your dorm and and go to visit your opa by lake ontario, as you hitchhike the arid dusty highway to peterborough and fly back to vancouver to fit your life back together.



- 7) you might start cutting yourself again, the confused thirteen-year-old reactionary part of yourself taking over. the years of christian teaching, the chilliwack church pro-life rallies will rush back before you give yourself credit for making a logical decision in your life.

- 8) months later, you'll feel a twinge of betrayal when you overhear a close friend remark on the condolences she feels towards a couple who she doesn't particularly like who had just had an abortion. "it's different when they're in love," she'll say. "it's like killing your first born." it's not like you weren't thinking about the difference in situation, whether or not abortion would be more painful if shared with someone you love, but why wasn't your baby considered your first born? would it be loved any less, even if the father wasn't involved? fuck you, you'll think. but you'll understand what she means.

I became pregnant because the condom of my companion fell off, and neither of us noticed during the time of intercourse. When I realized I was pregnant one month later, the choice was clear, I couldn't keep this baby. It was not planned, I didn't want a baby, I was too young, and I didn't know enough about my so-called 'companion'...Ironically, he became my husband two years later. What a way to start a relationship.

We went to see a gynaecologist, a friend of his, who announced to him that he was going to be a father. "What about me?", I thought, didn't that make me a future mother? I was not prepared at all, and neither was he. I made the decision to have an abortion, the decision was mine, my choice. But he approved, relieved. His friend, the gynaecologist, gave us the name of a clinic that gave abortions, even though it was illegal at the time. I felt totally in control and calm about my decision, it was my body, and only I could decide what was or wasn't right for me, nobody else. I wouldn't have tolerated it any other way. It was my mistake and I was going to repair it my way, only my way.

I was 22 years old and living in Montreal. The year was 1975. The world was still experiencing the appearance of feminism and the women's liberation movement. I never liked the term

'feminist'; labelling and giving names to sound smart never appealed to me. I was me, a young woman and that's all, not a 'feminist' or a 'liberated woman' or some other redundant name. But I did feel strongly about the fact that I had a choice, and I was free, completely free to



choose, this was exhilarating because it was new.

Freedom was a concept I had never experienced before. My childhood, during the fifties, was one in which I was made to feel guilty about almost everything, everything was 'dirty' according to my society and especially my parents.

My generation, as far as I know, was loved, but wrongly loved, by their parents. There was no understanding, no communication, no freedom. My only escape was to leave this nonsense and that's just what I did. For the freedom to live my life, my way, I moved away, putting an ocean between my parents and I. And here, in Montreal, so

2)

bilingualism and national-unity were naive trudeau utopian dreams which you'll notice whilst pregnant in muggy quebecois dorms, barefoot, sickly, scared as fuck. the fact that everyone is speaking french is making everything that much more alienating and surreal. a waiting room full of fashion and blasé-ness en français. doctor with the accent you could cut a knife through. prochain stationnement: lionel-groulx, turnez a gauche, puis turnez a droît, mechanically speak a language that doesn't speak to you, mechanically go through a procedure you couldn't imagine doing in real life, in anglo-canada.

3)

the record store boy with the curly hair, your anglophone fling, who is not the father of your baby, will be supportive as fuck, rolling your joints, validating your choice (but you'll wish you didn't need so much validation later, wish you stood stronger by your decision so it wouldn't hit you so hard later, even though you don't regret it), ect, ect, ect. but he won't want his sister to know, will laugh nervously ("juls, shhh") when you talk about it too loudly when others are around.



4)

it'll spill one saturday early afternoon, when you and your friend tom are wading through the thick humid air to buy cigarettes at the depanneur. besides the boy you're seeing, he'll be the only one you tell in the entire province of quebec (so big and so unknowing). you won't know why him, maybe because it's convenient and at thirty-one, he might have some sagely advice, as an elder. he'll confess his girlfriends's abortion a year back and try to blink back tears that scatter down his face. "but don't tell anyone," he'll insist adamantly. then he'll look at you sympathetically. "mon deui, juls oh, mon deui."

5)

not that you'll regret it (god no), but it'll seem like your abortion is just another link in the arduous chain of sexual experiences in which you end up the guilty one, the emotionally-distressed one, the hysterical one, while the

DEAR PRO-CHOICE ACTION COMMITTEE

Last January, I picked up a pamphlet distributed by your organization off a table at a Rock For Choice event. This was at the Church of Pointless Hysteria--sketchy Storm brewing keg beer was sold that night and everyone thought the floor would collapse during The Gossip. Your pamphlet, entitled 'Information on Abortion for Teenagers', was of interest to me because I was once a teenager who had an abortion. I was eight-teen and ill-informed and ill-prepared. I found the pamphlet very informative; it outlined the basic procedures of abortion and provided a comprehensive list of contact information of clinics that provided abortions. The pamphlet explicitly states that abortion is the choice of the girl alone, and not her parents, and not the father of the child, and I liked that that bit too. However, I found the pamphlet to be a bit lacking in a few ways. I remember a part about it not hurting, which is untrue for many girls, I'm sure, in a number of different ways. I mean, I understand the importance of minimizing the painful effects of abortion to counter the extremist rhetoric of the pro-life movement. But I think ignoring the personal trauma abortion causes for some girls is a bit discrediting for the pro-choice movement. It's okay to admit that not everything in life is one-sided and cut and dry, even things we're grateful for, like safe and legal abortions, because that's why abortions are provided in the first place.

★ INFORMATION ABOUT ABORTION ★

FOR *** JULY

- 1) your life is dictated by a strange ironic fate. case in point, the time you will get pregnant will be the night before you move out of your south vancouver apartment, the week before you go to montreal to carve a new, independent strings-free path in your adolescent life. but not fetus-free. sucker.

choose (though it was illegal, this fact made no difference to me). Not a hard choice to make, but a tough thing to go through, and what feels like a very lonely experience.

When I entered the waiting room, some other women were already there. We didn't speak to each other. The air was filled with shame and shyness. The instinct is not to talk about such things, even though we were going to share the same painful experience. Looking at the floor, avoiding eye contact, we waited to have our name called, to enter the 'room'. When my turn came, my knees started to shake uncontrollably, and felt as though they couldn't support me anymore. I had to lay down and my entire body was trembling, I watched my legs left from the table they were shaking so much. The nurse talked to me, reassuring me, and took my hand. During the operation, I crushed her hand. I've never been as frightened. I felt so lonely, connected to no one, except for the hand of this stranger, the nurse. I felt a great amount of pain, pain that I had anticipated, as if I had to be punished. When it was finished, and it seemed to last forever, I didn't know where I was anymore. My body felt as though they had ripped out my intestines. Feeling devastated, I knew I needed time to heal. It didn't take me too long. I was convinced that I did the right thing and that I didn't have to have regrets. And I didn't.

Signed: now a happy mother of two, by choice.

Abortion is not a widely discussed topic. Not the sort of thing one discusses over dinner, or even brings up lightly in a conversation. As in "Oh, yeah, when I was pregnant." No. No. It's quite a mood killer, like talking about your grandma's funeral. Unfortunately, the silence that shrouds abortion propagates shame and ignorance.

For example: did you know that drug induced abortion is available in BC? Yup. It's been available for a decade, and yet hardly anyone knows about it.

Drug Induced Abortion? Do tell

A "medical abortion" is a non-surgical procedure that uses two drugs, methotrexate and misoprostol, to induce a miscarriage. As with most pharmaceuticals, there is a lengthy list of side-effects, so it's hard to predict exactly how uncomfortable the experience will be, but it's relatively simple. After the initial appointment at the clinic, which includes a check up and information session, you'll get an injection of methotrexate and go home. Methotrexate creates a folic acid deficiency that stops cell division, resulting in termination of the pregnancy.

Then you wait. 3 days you wait. During these three days you may experience certain side effects; nausea, fatigue, digestive problems. I got a wicked case of gas, myself - Not too big a deal, but definitely annoying - after a while I really wanted to wear a sign or something as a disclaimer: "It's not my fault, I'm miscarrying" Ah, but signs are so gauche.

On the third day you insert the misoprostol tablets, placing them right up against your cervix. The misoprostol dilates your cervix, allowing the pregnancy to pass through. As for the pain factor? Well, they suggest you insert the misoprostol right before you go to bed and take extra strength painkillers. They also supply gravel in case you get nauseous. I did. Dawn found me stumbling to the bathroom, puking, and cramping. Then the blood flowed. And flowed. And flowed.

Painful? Yes. Worse than I expected? No. Would I do it again? Yes. Though I've never had a surgical

Medical Abortions.

A Non-Surgical

Alternative Available

In British Columbia

Krisztina Kunn



They put me to sleep and basically gave me a second surgery. I don't know whether it was a dilation & evacuation or dilation & curettage. I still don't have a really clear idea of why I started bleeding all of a sudden and not just after the initial surgery.

I spent the night in the hospital I guess. The next day my sister and I continued driving to Victoria. I spent a while there visiting and being by myself and exploring the area. I only remember sewing and stringing little beads for hours, and the summer sun glowing through veined leaves that made me think of placentas. In photos from that time in Victoria I am smiling and normal. I didn't write anything in my journal about how I felt; and usually I write a lot.

Today my sister, the one who was driving, has a two year old baby. I find it hard to believe that my little niece's cousin was inside me, and I couldn't let them meet. I am absolutely crazy about my niece and even though right now I don't think I want to have kids, I know that I could have. I was capable. Or I could have brought the baby to term and let someone who wanted a child raise it. However much I told myself I couldn't do those things, I know I could have. I had a friend in high school who gave up his baby for adoption; he would get pictures in the mail and talk about "my kid."

I DESPERATELY WISH I HAD USED MY CHOICE DIFFERENTLY.

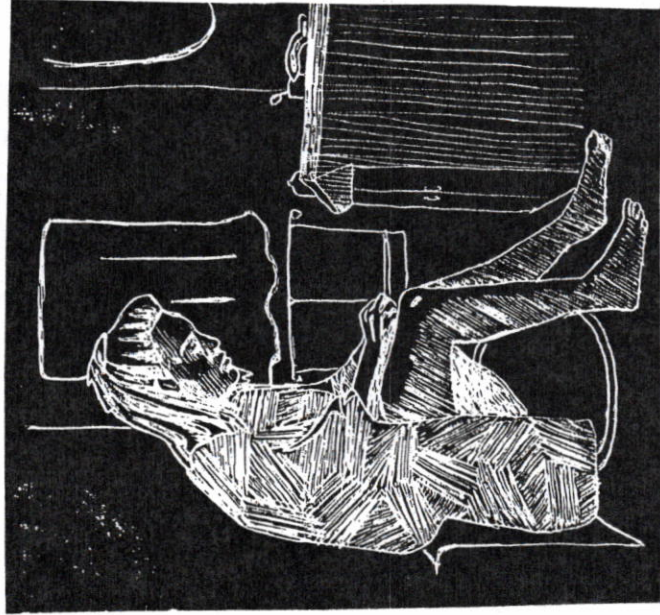
WORDS AND ART:
RACHAEL TAYLOR
soygirl@yahoo.com



My sister pulled into a restaurant and called an ambulance in the next town, while I lay in the back seat moaning and soon almost screaming. They said they would meet us on the road, so we drove down the highway, my sister terrified out of her mind, and me unable to think of anything else but the pain. Somewhere, we heard and then saw the ambulance and flagged it down. They took me to the hospital of whatever town we were in with the siren wailing.

In the emergency room, I remember being on a bed, with a woman doctor trying to talk to me and I was just crying and yelling. I don't remember wondering what was going on, I just wanted it to stop. The doctor gave me a shot of something in my hip and I yelled at her that it hurt, take the needle out, it hurts, until she said "It's out!" I just cried and yelled for my sister until they let her come in.

Soon they inserted an IV in my hand and fed me morphine. That made me calm down. I got pretty high. My sister was telling me how strong I was, and remarked that I was so calm. I drawled, "It's the drugs... they expand your mind." For some reason that was hilarious and we laughed and laughed. Our family is like that. We laugh hardest when life is hardest.



After a while I noticed there was a clear liquid dripping down my arm from the IV, but I thought, druggedly, that must be normal. But then my arm started getting really itchy, and I was too high to scratch it. When I told the doctors, they basically realized that I am allergic to morphine. I was so high that I felt a distracted sort of irony, but didn't really care what happened. They must have put me to sleep. I don't remember anything else, but I know they explained to me that my abortion hadn't been complete; that is, there was some kind of tissue still left inside my body. I don't know if that's rare or a big deal or what.

Quick Facts:

drugs used: Methotrexate

and Misoprostol

how effective: 90%

good up to: 7-9 weeks pregnancy

where can I get it: Ellen Wiebe Clinic

Vancouver BC

604.874.9897

how much:

\$50 with coverage

\$275 without

There are rumours of other clinics performing medical abortions, but after many phone calls and internet searches, I was unable to locate any of them.

So there you have it, another method of safe and effective abortion, but it's only available in one clinic in BC. Yeah, that's better than nothing, but it's certainly not good enough. And while I don't see our options changing any time soon, it's important to push for more awareness and to break the code of silence that surrounds this more-common-than-you-think procedures.



method again because it's less invasive and feels more natural; a miscarriage rather than an operation. And you can do it in the comfort and privacy of your own home.

The Particulars:

Okay, here's the bad news: this method only works in the very early stages of pregnancy, up to 7 weeks. Since your pregnancy is calculated from the first day of your last period, you have 3 weeks from the moment you are late to have this procedure. The upside is that it'll all be over weeks before you'd ever get into a clinic for a surgical abortion.

Some more bad news: Medical Abortions are 90% effective. So if you are in the unlucky 10% it doesn't work for, you will have to go in for a surgical abortion after all. (A few days after you insert the misoprostol, you are required to go back into the clinic for an ultrasound to make sure the procedure worked.)

Is this RU486?

No, the abortion drug, RU486 is not legal in Canada. While it is a similar procedure, RU486 is a faster and more effective method. So why are these drugs legal while RU486, a better method, is not? Loopholes, my friends, loopholes. While RU486 [or mifepristone] has not yet been approved for use in Canada, it is legal to administer drugs for medical conditions other than what the drugs are originally intended for. So it's legal in Canada to use methotrexate and misoprostol in combination to induce a miscarriage because they have already been approved to treat other conditions. Methotrexate has been used extensively to treat cancer, psoriasis, and rheumatoid arthritis while misoprostol is used to prevent gastric ulcers. That's the simple answer; a more complicated one would include a marginally articulate diatribe on the wide reaching effects of patriarchal capitalism and the Christian right.

Where is this available?

Unfortunately, even though these drugs are widely available and easy to administer, there is only one clinic that officially uses them for abortions. Ellen Wiebe operates a clinic on West Broadway that has been administering medical abortions since 1993.



, the most comforting and reliable river. My river, my blood. Such a big part of me, it is me. If you are lucky, I will let you touch it, to taste it, to feel the heat. You were that lucky. I let you in completely and fully. Your visit left me with something foreign, new and unexpected. I knew it was there, as every woman does even before the river stops.

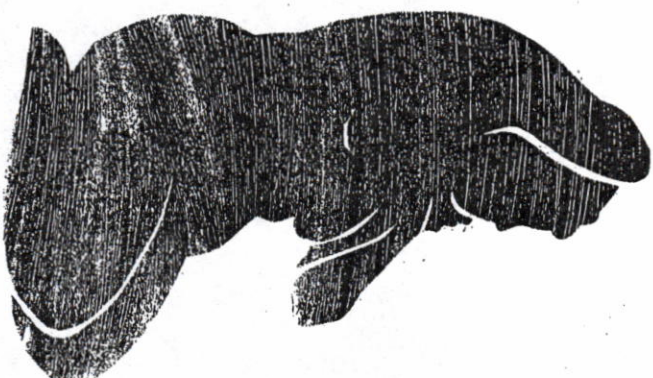
Vancouver 2001

anonymous

I left you yesterday and it was so good last night my love. Just a couple exams, a few weeks of things to do, and we will be together again, this time my trip is short. I am expecting my blood any day now, it is so reliable and punctual. Never any surprises. So my days go on and on. I am studying so much for exams, I do not see a week go by. I am expecting blood any day now, I carry my keeper everywhere with me, waiting for that wet feeling. It never comes. After some time the panic sets in, I know this feeling, it has happened before. I know why I feel this pit in my stomach, this lump in my throat and these tears in my eyes. No blood.

I turn to my plants, and feeling the majesty of nature pulse through my body and excite every nerve; I know they will understand. They have always been woman's allies. I think of those yellow bitter weeds growing everywhere and I know they will deliver. I make some tea and begin to drink. I drink and drink, I think of this newly forming life in me breaking free and flowing out. Day1...Day2...Day3...Day4...no blood. Day5, I feel some cramping. I know the toxicity of the plant is contracting my uterus, and violently trying to expel the endometrium. But it is not enough, still no blood; there will be no blood. On the sixth day, I know I have to stop taking the herbs, they are making me nauseous, light-headed. They are slowly poisoning me, enough so that my body cannot sustain life. I thank my plants for trying. So I call you on the phone my love. I tell you that my tits are sore, and I am sick every morning and that I swear I can see my abdomen expanding. I tell you that I am scared and that the herbs didn't work. I talk about my blood and how much I miss it and how my body is foreign to me and I am numb.

I talked about birth control with a nurse from Planned Parenthood and decided that right after my surgery I would go on Depo-Provera, which is an injection they give you that prevents you from getting pregnant for six months. I think I stayed on it for a year or a year and a half. It really fucked up my emotions and made me depressed. Eventually I went on anti-depressants, but went off them a few months later around the same time I stopped taking the Depo shot. The shot also fucked with my cycle so that I didn't really have periods, I just had completely random spotting throughout the year.



About a month after the surgery, my sister and I were driving on our way to Victoria to visit our other sister, when I started bleeding. I figured it was a normal period, although a little heavy. I borrowed a pad from my sister, but soon I could tell it was full. The first day of my period is always pretty heavy, so I didn't think much of it, and borrowed another pad. We were on the highway between two towns, so we just pulled over to the side of the road so I could change the pad. My underwear was soaked; I just threw it off the side of the road. The blood had soaked through my pants a little bit, so I sat on a t-shirt. But it was starting to hurt. It seems ridiculous now that we didn't realize something was wrong until it started to hurt. I started having the worst cramps ever, ten times worse, a hundred times worse.

I didn't feel like my body was hijacked, because I knew that it was because of something I did that this was happening. Even though I had been using some protection, I knew it wasn't 100% effective, and by accepting the risk of pregnancy I had basically opened the door to this little person. And now I was going to close it.

I was going to have an abortion. I don't remember coming to that conclusion—in fact, my memory of that whole springtime is very blurry. I just remember preparing myself for the act. I read this one book, I don't know where I got it, about talking to your baby and explaining the situation to him or her, apologizing, and saying that you are not ready for a child right now. So I did that. I closed my eyes and concentrated as hard as I could and tried to feel like my baby could understand my communication. I tried to tell it why I couldn't have a baby. I finished my silent attempt at penitence and tried to feel either forgiven, or as though there was nothing to forgive. But I couldn't even clarify that for myself.

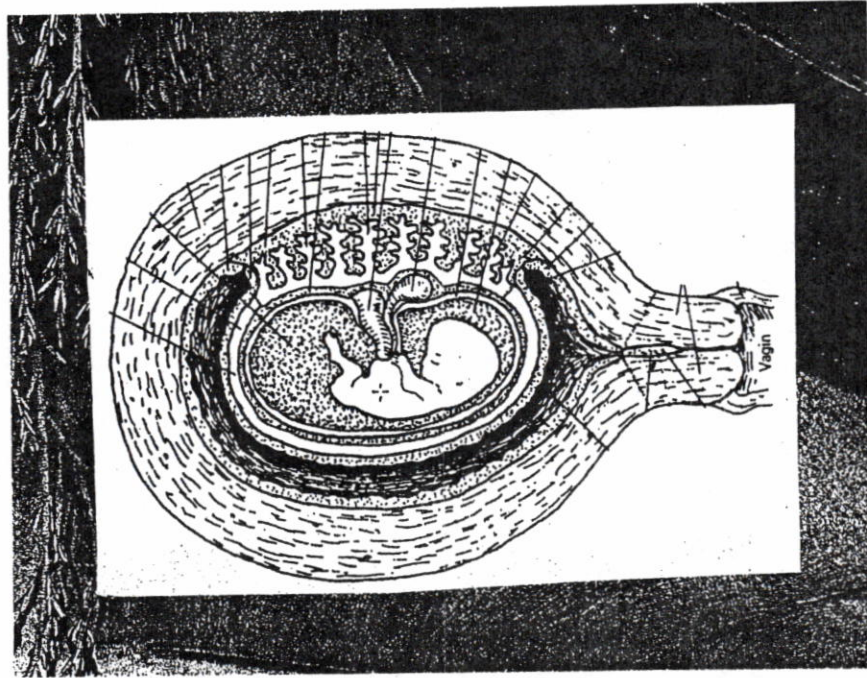
I didn't fully consider adoption as an option. I've noticed some women simply say, "Adoption was not an option for me." That's all I said, too. I know that I personally had no good reason to dismiss the idea of adoption, and I regret that today. I know I chose abortion for even more selfish reasons.

My memory of the whole period is really fuzzy. There was no clinic in the small town where I lived, you'd just go to Planned Parenthood and the surgery was done at the hospital. I ended up going to the hospital twice, because the first time I just couldn't do it. I didn't really change my mind or anything. But when I was wearing the gown, lying on the bed, putting out my arm for them to put an IV in me, I broke down and cried and cried. It wasn't fear of the procedure. I just couldn't go through with it. I wasn't sure whether I would be able to do it later or not, I just knew I couldn't do it right now. The nurses and doctors were very gentle with me, telling me to take my time.

I don't remember which time it was, but one of the times my boyfriend came with me to the hospital, but after sitting with me in the waiting room for about fifteen minutes, he said, "Well, I gotta go. I have to meet somebody downtown." Like it was no big deal. I guess that was his way of trying to avoid dealing with the abortion, just like the abortion was my way of not dealing with the pregnancy. I guess he just couldn't handle it either. I don't know. I don't speak with him anymore. Throughout the rest of our relationship, which lasted more than a year afterward, we never spoke much about the abortion.

So then the second time, I did go through with it. I had a full anesthesia and everything went normally. I don't remember the date, I consciously ignored it so I wouldn't have to think about it every anniversary (that didn't work, I think about it year-round). I also ignored my baby's due date, but I know it would've been in November. My child would be almost two and a half right now.

I am home and finally we are together, just the 3 of us. I go to the clinic and make my appointment. I am eating well, eating for two. I feel my body changing so much. I can feel this baby growing. I know it wants to live, that's why the herbs didn't work. I'm sorry not this time darling. Your mommy and daddy weren't thinking, got lost in the heat of it all. And I know what you look like, I know you are developing arms and legs and lungs. I know you are a girl with your daddy's blue eyes and your mommy's dark skin. I know you are growing, because I feel weak and I eat so much, but never enough. I feel your heaviness when I walk.



He is laying beside me and I hear his heavy breathing, he is asleep. I am thinking of my first blood. At the wonderful age of 14, I woke up on a beautiful sunny day and saw blood everywhere, on my pyjamas, on my legs, and all over the sheets. I called my mother at work and told her what happened. She was so happy, she sounded so proud. I thought it was weird and I felt like a freak, but I also felt like the queen of the world. I knew inside, of the power I had. I know this red flow every month changed me and gave me powerful sexuality - my sexuality. I knew I had the power to give life. I wake up at 2am and eat a box of kraft diner (the first in my life, as well as the last). I watch him sleep. He is so beautiful with his eyes closed. I think of him forming in his mother's belly. He came from the blood women want to hide and ignore.

I cry when I think of my mother. I think of the connection we have and how her blood nourished me. So my little girl, why can I not do the same for you? It is just not the time. I crave my monthly blood and I know you are just not meant to be.

In the morning we get up and go to the clinic. I am scared. The nurse brings me into a room and gives me a pad to put in my underwear. Then I sit and she tries to find a vein in my arm. They have to insert a catheter for fast entry of blood in case of hemorrhage. She finds no veins in my arm, so she moves to the other arm. No veins there either. She then moves to poking at my hands. I feel so dry. I haven't bled for 2 months and there is no vein with a large enough blood supply for the catheter. So dry. Finally she gives up and attaches it to my cervix. The doctor is nice, he does this all day, so I am just another face, another student, another wife, another daughter. He is the bringer of blood and I instantly like him. I lay down on the table and get some sedatives, relaxants, and anesthetics. I am awake for the entire procedure.

I put my hand on my abdomen and feel my uterus violently contract from the suction of the vacuum. I look at the machine with the hose attached to it, I see the hose go red and then clear.

I am sorry little one it was not the time, and I hope it didn't hurt. I could not give you what my mother gave me, and what her mother gave her, and what her mother gave her.

I was sixteen and the boy I'd been seeing for about three months was seventeen when I got pregnant. I'm twenty now, and when I talk about it these days, I am almost distant. Somehow I just feel like my abortion was nothing out of the ordinary, as far as teenage pregnancies and abortions go. I probably went through a lot of the same emotions thousands of other girls and women have.

We were both overwhelmed and I spent a lot of time crying and feeling torn. None of my options seemed right. When I asked my boyfriend what he would do if I kept the baby, he didn't say anything. His silence made me feel alone. I spent my seventeenth birthday at my house surrounded by friends, but I couldn't think of anything except how there was a little kid growing inside me. My little kid, Tom's little kid. As time went on I just wanted it to be gone; I didn't want to deal with it.

Fortunately, my family - my two older sisters and my mom - were absolutely there for me and didn't judge me harshly, get mad at me, or tell me what to do. If not for them, however, I would have been pretty alone in the experience. My closest friend at the time was pro-life and had not even the most fundamental awareness of my need for her to be supportive, nor do I think she cared to be. She said a few things that really stuck out in my mind:

"You should have the baby. It'll be fun! You'd be a cool mom!"
"You know you can't have an abortion, don't you? It's wrong."
"Well, maybe you shouldn't have had sex, then."

I did my best to block her out but I still resent her lack of support (obviously, or I wouldn't be talking about it three years later).
I don't know what a girl would do in my situation if it hadn't been for my family, the only people I could talk to about it.
On top of having that support from my family I was a fairly independent person and probably didn't absolutely need support from friends anyway, so I was lucky.



When confronted with the stigma slapped on women who've had abortions, understandably a lot of women react with strong emotions in direct opposition to that stigma. They say they feel proud of their choice to have an abortion; they say they feel liberated and empowered by their abortion. My immediate impulse when I talk to someone who is thinking of having or has had an abortion is to help them; to somehow make them feel better. I remember and still feel the guilt, and instinctively, superficially, I don't want to see others burdened by that guilt. I imagine that's why a lot of women will reassure you with words like

"There's nothing to feel bad about." I imagine that's why they go one step further and say that abortion is liberating, something they feel good about.

I can understand how a woman feels good about *not* letting someone else decide what's best for her; about *not* putting someone else's needs before hers for the millionth time; about *not* accepting the stigma and shame and vilifying masks that have been plastered all over her as a "Woman-Who's-Had-An-Abortion" for as long as she or anyone can remember. But these are all negotiations, they are only cancellations of other people's bullshit; these are not assertions of positive aspects of abortion. And I personally can't think of anything positive about my abortion, at least not anything that was worth it.

And I come to a pivotal point. I believe that what grew inside of me when I was 16 was there because I basically invited it in; and I believe that I killed it. I didn't terminate a pregnancy, or not-carry-a-fetus-to-term, or exercise family planning. I killed my baby.

To me, today, the fact that I made my own life easier by having the abortion is not worth that. I am not ashamed, but I regret my abortion. I feel I made a bad decision about worth. I traded something that I believe didn't belong to me — my baby's body — for a selfish manifestation of sovereignty over something that does belong to me — my body. And today I feel that for me, that wasn't a fair trade. I think that my child had the same rights to her or his body that I have to mine. I know now that I didn't put enough thought into all of this before I decided to put myself first. BUT, I don't think a woman should ever be told what is best for her or her baby or her body.

Some people don't believe the same thing that I do. Some people avoid saying those words — "kill" and "baby." I'm not writing to argue or to convince anybody, I am still just telling my story.

I guess the bottom line is I regret my decision, but I still call it mine.

The second time is sometimes worse than the first time
What I didn't know then was when it happened again
I'd be laid out, my insides taken out by doctors who didn't give a shit about who I was or who was inside of me and another maybe person never to be.

That was the saddest thing to me
this other person I would never see and this decision was left entirely up to me
so all of the weight of the consequences beared down on my body as I was rolled into the cold room

tears rolling down my face drowning me until the darkness caved over and the next thing I knew it was all over.

Until I went home to live out the days of my decisions and nobody knew the pain that I lived in because no matter what happened I still had to be a mom to the one who made it into my world and my life oh yeah and I was also the wife

of a father whose way was to go his own way without thinking twice about my sacrifice
But I have gone my own way too, living my own life and I still bear the weight of the child that I kept she fills my time and my mind with more dreamy childhood days than those lost ones I from time to time forget

I think about them as though they are stars in the sky, my tiny constellation waiting to come down to the world at the right time and location I know that my decision was

the right one since children never ask to be born
We always just assume it is the right thing to do to have kids when "I'm pregnant" is unexpectedly the case

and abortion is seen as merely a shameful disgrace and a failure to be a good person but really the choice to let go of life

is the most selfless act, yet another sacrifice that women must make for always the right reasons for the others around her already depend on her

to guide them in their already living lives and she needs to live hers too.

Maybe some day, she thinks, we can be together me and you.

And turning around without looking back is the heaviest load carried by a mother on her back.

-Greta Airhart.

Dedicated to every woman who has ever been faced with the decision to have a child even though she could not take care of it in the way she knows best. Also to every woman who has bravely aborted against her will (since I would argue that every abortion has broken the hearts and spirits of the women who have done it) or for reasons of self-preservation. We act like abortion is merely a choice - and a selfish one too! I hope these words illustrate that the choice is to do what is right for other's, including the mother and I ask, what more could any mother be expected to do?

On

my

hands

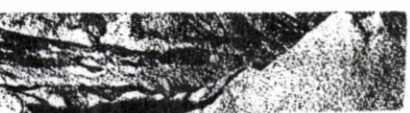
I hadn't put my thoughts about abortion into words until Gabriela asked me to write for this zine and I hesitated. Thinking about why I was reluctant, I came up with three reasons, which in turn ended up clarifying my experience for me.

FIRST, I HAVE A GREAT RESPECT FOR, AND AME OF, THE HISTORY OF ABORTION.

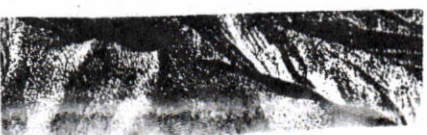
It's intimidating to me because I can't believe that I am actually a part of something that has impacted the lives of women around the world throughout history; let alone that I might have something to add to this history. Second, I don't feel ok about my choice to have an abortion; and if I go into that, I want to avoid giving the impression that other women shouldn't feel ok about theirs either. Third, the actual process of my own abortion was very complicated. I didn't want to scare other women or paint too dangerous or painful a picture of the experience.

In the end, I am writing now not in spite of, but because of my respect for this history.

I AM WRITING BECAUSE I WANT OTHER WOMEN TO WRITE, BECAUSE NO WOMAN SHOULD FEEL HER STORY UNHEARD FOR ANY REASON. ALL OF OUR STORIES MAKE UP THIS HISTORY. MY STORY, EMPHASIZING MY REASONS FOR BEING PRO CHOICE AND YET FEELING SORRY ABOUT MY OWN ABORTION, IS A VALID STORY BUT ONLY A DROP IN THE BUCKET OF MILLIONS OF WOMEN'S STORIES THAT SHOULD NOT BE SILENCED NOT BY ANYONE AND NOT BY US.



Since women have always come up against such brutal, oppressive, and deadly forces when protecting or using their rightful choice, when I discuss abortion, I am desperate to be supportive of other women. As a woman who's had an abortion speaking to other women about abortion, I emphasize my strong feelings that a woman's choice is her inalienable right. To deny her that choice - or to "let" her use it, yet make her feel that she is wrong or bad - is not only fucked up and dangerous, it is theft, hijacking, tyranny. Knowing this, and also knowing that I regret my abortion *on my own terms*, I am having a really hard time carefully articulating how I feel. So I'm trying to look at my story through a narrow window, looking only at my own abortion and not spilling any of my story on other women.



when i used emmenagogues and abortifacient herbs earlier this year to end a suspected pregnancy, i had a pretty good experience with it. i wrote a story about it for the fifth issue of my zine to de-mystify it, present herbal abortion as another choice, and help other people that might be going through something similar. and as a lot of you also know i got a really amazing response to the piece. talking to so many other girls about their experiences has totally made me think about how



jessica rae disaster

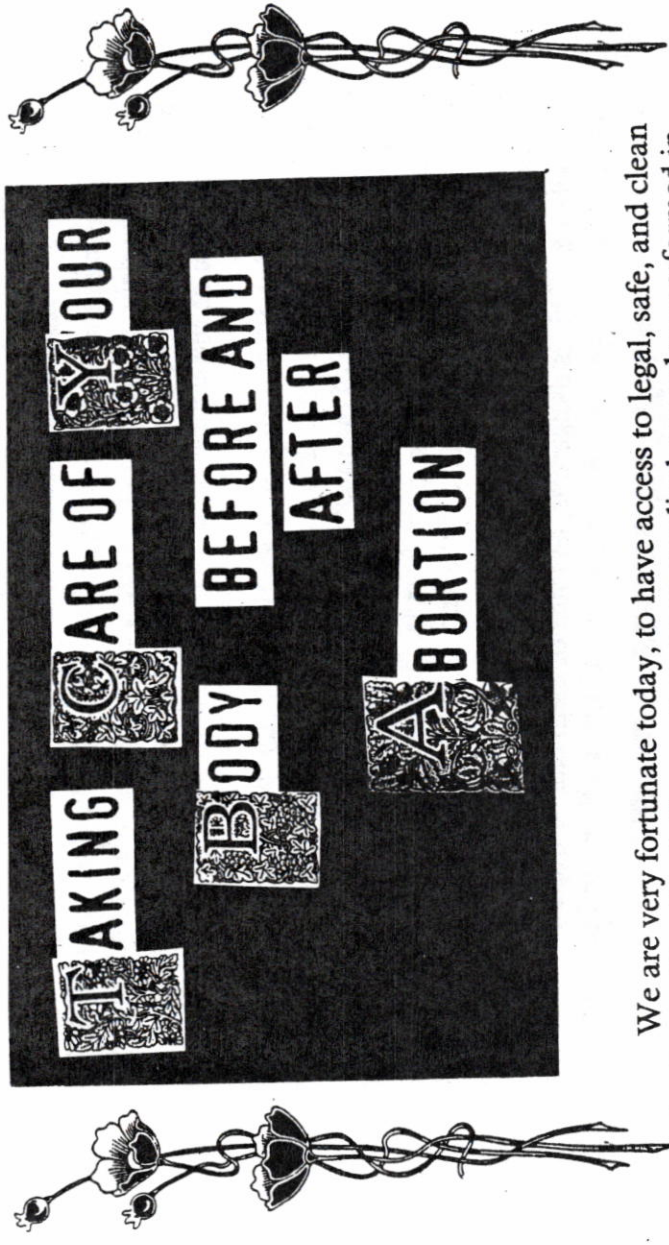
important it is to break the silence around abortion and reproductive health in general. zines like merrydeath's "MINE" and gabrielle's abortion story compilation zine are also helping to break that silence. one of the most important things you can do is talk to other people because talking will help erase the stigma and the shame we've been taught.

i know a lot of people who have had good experiences with herbal abortion but i also know it's not as simple as a lot of people make it out to be. they fail a lot of the time and are really only effective if you keep good track of your menstrual cycles and are really regular, because you have to begin treatments a couple of days before your period is supposed to begin. they can also have really shitty side effects: i was so dizzy when i was taking the herbs i could hardly ride my bike and i had constant headaches and horrible cramps towards the end. not very comfortable but certainly better than being pregnant.

i think the worst thing of the experience was feeling like i shouldn't talk about it.

doing clinic activism is still really important. escorting and volunteering as a support person at an abortion clinic can literally save someone's life and sanity. educating people about the alternatives to clinic abortion (like using herbs or menstrual extraction) is really important too; i think this information should be made widely available. my friend jami says that is our job as activists but i still don't know where to start. if anyone has ideas i would love to hear them.

i think the bottom line is we have to be really careful of who we might be hurting when we are empowering ourselves and think about how our privileges play a role.



TAKING **CARE OF** **YOUR** **BODY** **BEFORE AND** **AFTER** **ABORTION**

We are very fortunate today, to have access to legal, safe, and clean abortions. Abortion is the most common medical procedure performed in Canada. The procedure itself is fast, clean, and usually with no or minimal complications. As a herbalist, I will not be addressing herbal abortion or the use of emmenagogues and abortifacients for a few reasons. First, most of us, who live in larger cities, have access to clean, safe abortions performed by competent and knowledgeable medical personnel. I understand the plight of some women, who live in small communities and have no access to an abortion clinic, in these cases; herbal abortion may be considered as an option. Those women considering herbal abortion need to research it, and be under the care of someone who knows what they are doing (by this, I do not mean your best friend, but a herbalist who has experience with this, and who can monitor you frequently). The abortifacient plants are toxic; their main mode of action is through assaulting the body to such a state that it is unable to keep the embryo. Some are potent neurotoxins, and may affect other parts of the nervous system. Some work by decreasing blood supply to the uterus and literally starving the embryo, and others work by changing the hormonal levels. Personally, I do not recommend herbal abortion, for the simple fact that it can be dangerous and the proper dosages for these plants have not been established. Many of the plants have a very fine line between having a therapeutic effect and having harmful effects. I am aiming this piece for women who are having 1st trimester abortions, and who have little or no complications. There are a few different kinds of abortion, and I will only be focusing on the suction method. The dilation and extraction method are used in the second trimester, and they are generally more invasive. For those

women having second trimester abortions, you can follow the same herbal medicine guidelines. I have not provided a description of a second trimester abortion, as they are the exception, rather than the rule and the herbal protocol remains the same.

So, I will be focusing on preparing the body for medical abortion, and what you can do after the abortion to get your body and mind back to a desirable state. One of the most important steps to take is to find a clinic, which is supportive, that they have adequate counselors and one that is more women orientated. Support from friends, family and partners are also important. You never want to feel alone in this. Just being able to talk to a close friend about your feelings, fears and expectations is a cornerstone for mental health during this time. Do not go to the first clinic you find in the phone book. This is dangerous, as some of them can be fronts for Christian anti-abortion groups. When you do find a clinic, go there and talk to the nurses.

Ask them what kind of counseling they have for you, and for your partner (he may need it too), ask about what pre-abortion tests they do, how many women they service, and if they can help you with birth control. The clinic should be multi-faceted, and not only focusing on abortion, but also on pre- and post-care. Prior to your abortion, the clinic should confirm the pregnancy test and assess the gestation date (how old the fetus is). They should also perform an abdominal/pelvic exam to confirm the date of conception and to assess if the embryo has attached to the uterus and not in another place. They should also test for infections, such as chlamydia and gonorrhea. If you are experiencing vaginal discharge, abnormal bleeding, if you have any sores or lumps around your vaginal area, then you can request other STD tests. They should also check your hemoglobin and blood groups at this time. They should also take a medical history to determine if there is any reason you should not get an abortion, or if you have any allergies or drug reactions. The clinic should also have a resting post-abortion room that you can use until you are ready to leave the clinic. If you do not feel like you can choose the right clinic for you, then contact a women's community center. They can refer you to doctors or clinics that provide unbiased abortion services.

Depending on your financial situation, you may want to choose a private abortion clinic. The doctors who work there want to be there, in contrast to public funded clinics, where they have to be there and perform abortions despite their own ethical and religious beliefs. This can

I want to talk about an issue that has been on my mind a lot recently. While I think discussing herbal abortion and alternative healthcare in general is very important I also think we have to be really careful about how we present such information and recognize how our privilege plays a role in how we talk about these things. I wish all information on things like herbal emmenagogues/abortifacients was widely available and that of us lived in a supportive community of activists dedicated to health and empowerment, with access to herbalists, midwives, and self help groups made up of trusted friends willing to help you with any choice you decided to make. This isn't a world many of us live in though.

I have read feminist health zines that call planned parenthood a tool of the patriarchy. I guess real feminists don't need to get tested for stds? and while I will admit that my one and only experience with planned parenthood wasn't so great (besides finding out I wasn't pregnant! not to mention the free condoms and lube), and they tried to pressure me into chemical birth control I did not want, it is important that places like planned parenthood exist. Inga muscio implies in a piece in her book cunt, that clinical abortions are somehow oppressive to women and that our right to them isn't so important anymore because when she was pregnant she took some herbs and then "her and her woman friends made magic", this is a pretty harmful thing to say in a time when our abortion rights are constantly under fire and abortion providers are becoming fewer and farther between.

Cindy addresses this in the latest issue of dots (which a lot of you have probably read, and if you shouldn't I demand you do because it is great), when she writes a letter to Inga about how it's really dangerous to talk about herbal abortion the way she did in a pop culture kind of book like cunt, because what she wrote about totally ignores the fact that sometimes herbal abortions don't work and that there is a huge amount of privilege in being able to take a week of work to envision the lining of your uterus shedding; or even in knowing that options like that exist in the first place. Probably most disturbing is the way Inga talks about her clinical abortion experiences, using language eerily reminiscent of anti-choice propaganda. She describes everything from the noise the vacuum suction makes to the pain in vivid detail and generally does an awesome job of making abortion sound like a really fucking terrifying experience. And I know for some people it can be, and a lot of people probably have had clinical abortion experiences, but a lot of people I have talked to have had very good experiences with a supportive medical staff.

I've seen herbal abortion recipes reprinted in zines with no mention of the possible risks (like hemorrhaging from an incomplete miscarriage), no mention of side effects and not even a list of resources to obtain more complete information. A lot of them don't mention how if you do this you should always be absolutely sure you can obtain a clinical abortion if the herbs fail since they can cause serious birth defects. Now, I'm all for DIY but I think there's a pretty big difference between learning to silk-screen patches from a zine, and learning to induce a miscarriage. I don't think reading one zine is sufficient information.



beneath my sheets
there is a fire in my belly
there are knives inside me
i don't need your implements
your medical minds
you can't see what i'm hiding
my friend is here with me
i forget where i am
i am holding the fetus
it is a tiny red bird
that i roll in my fingers
all delicate and cold
i hold tissue and bone
i don't need no doctor

i just reached in and grabbed it
i screamed when it came out
i curled up in the fetal
it hurt like a fucker
like fucking the father
but he's not cuz i killed it
he's not cuz i killed it
in his mind it's murder
my dear mister pro - lifer
you will never be me

my friend she leaves kisses
and wings on my pillow
i dream about windows
and small fists inside shells.

with love, laurel.

dramatically change your experience at the clinic. Private clinics generally have more sympathetic and understanding staff (remember: they want to be there). Some private clinics may give you your own room to rest in after the abortion and they generally spend more time with you and your counseling care will be more in-depth and extensive. Most women have better experiences in private clinics. So, if you have the extra money, this may be a better choice for you. If you don't have the cash, then ask a community women's center which clinic offers the best and most personal services.

The counseling at the clinic should be thorough and carried out in a private setting, where you feel comfortable. They are obliged to discuss alternatives to abortion, and this should be done in a non-aggressive manner, where you do not feel pressure to change the choice you have made. They should also tell you how the abortion will be carried out and the risks of it. They should also offer post-abortion counseling, contraceptive counseling and they should arrange for a follow-up with you.

Most abortions are performed during the first 12 weeks; this is a first trimester abortion. There are different ways a doctor will perform an abortion and the methods change from doctor to doctor, and from province to province. Usually, a slim piece of seaweed (laminaria) is inserted into your cervix (the opening to your uterus), a few hours to one day before the abortion, to start the process of widening the opening the cervix. When you

get to the clinic you will lie on an examining table, with your feet in stirrups, and the doctor will insert a speculum into your vagina. You will be given local anesthetic, in the area of the cervix, to numb it. You may also be given general anesthetic, but this is not always the case. At this point, the doctor will gradually widen the cervix by inserting and removing a series of narrow, tapered rods. Each rod will be slightly wider in diameter than the last.



Once

the cervix dilates to a desirable state, the doctor will insert a small, hollow tube, which is attached to an aspirator machine. The machine is turned on, and the doctor moves the tube back and forth in your uterus. When the uterus is empty, the suction is stopped. The walls of the uterus are then gently scraped with a looped-shaped instrument (curette), to ensure that no tissue from the embryo or the placenta remains. This procedure usually takes about 10 minutes. The dilation can make many women feel uncomfortable, and you may feel cramping both during and after the procedure.

Under proper medical conditions, abortion is a very safe procedure, and generally the earlier it is performed, the safer it is. About 97% of women who have a first trimester abortion have no complications or post-abortion complications. If complications do arise, they are usually minor and treatable. Single first trimester abortions, performed by vacuum aspiration (the procedure described above), have not been shown to negatively affect a woman's ability to become pregnant and give birth to healthy children in the future. There has been some discussion as to whether or not having an abortion could make you more likely to develop breast cancer later in life; but these findings in studies have been inconclusive and inconsistent. There has been less research on women who have had multiple abortions, or who have had second-trimester abortion, using surgical procedures. So I have had a hard time finding data for long term health risks.

So, once you find out you are really pregnant, and if you make the decision to get an abortion, the best thing you can do for yourself is take care of yourself. You will have anywhere from a week to 6 weeks to prepare for your abortion. Whatever feelings you have at this time, get them out. **THIS IS IMPORTANT.** Too many women suffer and are left to their own thoughts.



The more you are keeping inside, the longer it will take to recover mentally.

Abortion can leave you feeling fragile, alone, and open to the world's insults.

It is important to have strong people around you, because you may not be as

strong as you want to be.

There are many things you can do to prepare your body for abortion. First, it is important to eat well, and to nourish your body. The embryo will take a lot out of you, nutritionally. For the first 3 months, the embryo is rapidly developing, and you are sharing all your nutrients with the embryo. If

they roll girls on beds past me
my own wheels point me to
a gaping mouth
an open wound
a dead sigh

click clack on cracked tiles

more girls roll by
it kills me inside

we are cattle
collateral damage

we don't look pretty

we are pale, anemic

i have cut off my hair

i am cold

my friend is here with me

the lights are too bright

blood stains the sheets

they will scrape our teeth clean

the doctors are rabid

their eyes gleam

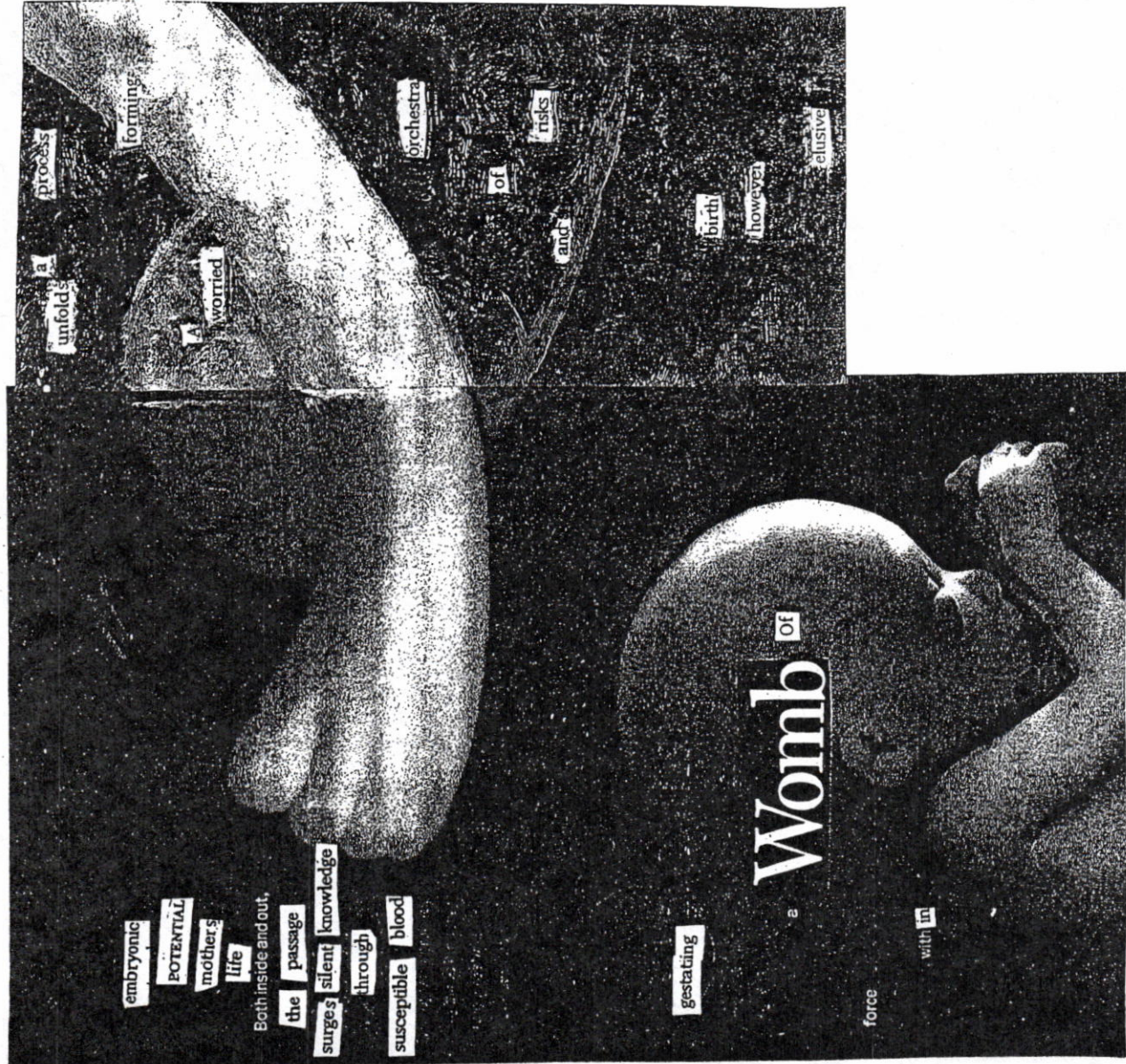
the nurses are warm but

death rides their shoulders

they open their mouths and say nothing

they can't see





mixed media:
magazine, acrylic, and found words
Danielle Arsenault
March 2003

you are not eating well, then this leaves you and not the embryo at risk for vitamin and mineral deficiencies (the embryo always, gets 1st pick over the mother). Make sure you are getting sufficient amounts of all your vitamins and minerals, and also enough protein and fat. Consult a reputable book on nutrition for this information. If you are still undecided about whether you are going to keep the child, then you need to see a doctor or a nutritionist, because this will change your nutritional requirements.

Make sure you are getting enough B vitamins, as this will help you deal with the stress, anxiety, and craziness you may be going through. There are many herbs which can help you in preparing for abortion. You can tailor a herbal tea or tincture according to your needs. I suggest that you focus on strengthening your uterus, focusing on your immune system and nervous system.

Since the uterus and the cervix are tissues directly involved in abortion, I suggest taking a tea or a tincture to strengthen them. A herb that is much used to strengthen the tissues of the uterus is red raspberry (Rubus idaeus). You can also use lady's mantle (Alchemilla vulgaris), and yarrow (Achillea millefolium). You can also use herbs that are toning and nourishing to the reproductive organs (they increase blood flow, thus nutrition to the uterus). You can use Black haw (Mitchella repens), motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca), and rosemary (Rosmarianus officinale).

There are many ways pregnancy and up-coming abortion affect your nervous system. First, the change in hormone levels will have an effect on your mood, and your ability to cope with circumstances. You may feel like crying all the time, numb, excited, angry, fearful, and any other emotion experienced by women. Herbs will not make any of these go away, but they do have direct and powerful actions on neurotransmitters, hormones, and the brain. Second, your psychological state will change. Some herbs act on the different parts of the brain, to change mood, perception and response. Herbalists, scientists and researchers do not know how herbs and their chemicals change us psychologically, so I will not pretend to know, and explain it here! First, you may want to look at some of the nervous system restoratives and tonics. Plants like St John's wort (Hypericum perforatum), blue vervain (Verbena officinalis), oatstraw (Avena sativa) and lemon balm (Melissa officinale) can be used to lift your spirits and promote a better mood. They all have a relaxing effect on the nervous system, but they will not put you to sleep or make you drowsy. They are tonics, so they can be used over long periods of time and in larger amounts than most herbs.

You may also want to consider using herbs that help your body adapt to stress better. These plants help to fortify and strengthen the body. They mostly work by increasing or decreasing the activity of your glands. For example, when faced with a stressful situation, your adrenal glands (which sit on top of your kidneys), release various hormones that prepare your body for dealing with stress and undesirable situations. If your situation is constantly stressful, these hormones are continuously being released, which can lead to

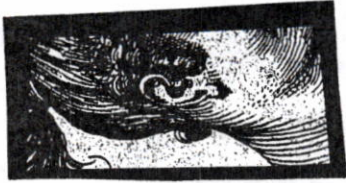
exhaustion of your adrenal glands, and various disorders stem from this. The hormones released by your adrenal glands are also continuously stimulating various hormones in your brain and nervous system, so that mental state, your outlook, perception and the ability for you to deal with long term stress decreases. Herbs that work to change the stress responses in your body are a great addition to any formula. They work to prevent mental and physical exhaustion. Some herbs to consider are licorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), which acts directly on the adrenal glands, oatstraw (*Avena sativa*), Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), gotu cola (*Hydrocotyl asiatica*) and ashwaganda (*Withania somniferum*). A herb that I would greatly recommend during this time is called rhodiola (*Rhodiola rosea*), this plant acts on the hypothalamus (the master gland which controls all other glands). It has some psychological activity, making it useful for mild depression and anxiety. It is excellent to be used pre and post abortion, as it decreases the amount of time it takes for muscles to recover from trauma (your uterus is a muscle). It also increases blood flow to stagnant areas, thus providing nutrients and enzymes for a speedier recovery.

You should also focus on increasing your immunity, before the abortion. This will decrease your chances for getting an infection (urinary, cold, flu, etc). Immune stimulants will also work to prevent the resurfacing of infection you may already have (genital herpes, or cold sores [herpes on your mouth]). Some herbs to consider for this purpose are osha (*Ligusticum porteri*), milk vetch (*Astragalus membranaceus*), reishi mushroom (*Ganoderma lucidum*), wild indigo (*Baptisia tincture*), and thyme (*thymus vulgaris*). I would also add, nettles (*Urtica dioica*), or alfalfa herb (*Medicago sativa*) to the formula. These herbs supply an ample amount of minerals and they are great in preventing anemia which is due to blood loss, (after the abortion, you may be bleeding anywhere from 1 to 14 days). There are a few herbs that one should stay away from before abortion. These include herbs that decrease blood clotting, these may increase your risk for hemorrhage, and they should be avoided before any operation. The herbs included are ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), willow (*Salix species*), melilot (*Melilotus officinale*), cleavers



everyone we been at an abortion clinic where people are protesting, there is inevitably someone with a sign, or someone talking about "commandment #6" they shall not kill" - trying to "save" someone from "sinning" and to all those precious liberals, sell 'n jerks. I want to say "what about commandment #5, which says before the one about kill and says, "the 7th day is the sabbath of the Lord" god, in if thou shalt not - to any way why aren't any of you moral teachers of my shifty minims w job, when i'm working a 10 hr shift on sunday, parading and trying to save my soul from the devil? and what's cause it's all about control and not the bible

-Simone



-besides the politics of being pro-choice that we know and hold dear i want to talk about those emotions that both camps of pro-choice and pro-life ignore. how it felt to have this growing thing inside. did we choose to ignore it's life, did we celebrate it, was it's passing meaningful to us?



-- sitting on that table, paper screen separating me and all the other women who will sit on it throughout the day, our connection broken through screens, shut doors, resting boom drapes slid shut. i tried to meet the eyes of the girl across from me, then the nurse peeked into my area, she almost seemed to scowl, cut me off completely, those drapes held tightly by her hands.

- getting ready i told myself, yes i will want to look at the remains afterwards. i need to see what i created. when the doctor asked me, my mind bolted, ran, my sadness so acute, i changed my mind right then. i didn't want to see the blood, later i was glad i didn't see it's hand, the torso.



(Galium aparine), meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria) and high amounts of garlic and onions. The garlic and onions are acceptable, when included in your diet, but do not use them in large amounts. I also do not recommend using herbs with high alkaloid content, as they can be hard on the liver, and they can interfere with proper liver metabolism, and thus affect the amount of clotting factors your liver produces. Usually, these herbs pose no problems. The risk is minimal, and this is mostly directed to those women, who have liver problems, a history of alcohol/drug abuse, hepatitis (from whatever cause), cirrhosis, or any congenital (birth) liver abnormalities. Some common herbs that have a high alkaloid content include goldenseal (Hydrastis canadensis), ephedra (Ephedra sinica), lobelia (Lobelia inflata), comfrey (Symphytum officinale), coltsfoot (Tussilago farfara), and wild lettuce (Lactuca virosa). There are many other herbs that contain alkaloids as their primary active chemicals, so if you have questions about them, consult a herbalist, or books written by a herbalist.



The best way to make a formula for yourself is to figure out what results you want to see and what you want to focus on. Choose one or two herbs from the above categories mentioned, and always add an immune stimulant, and nettle or alfalfa in your formula.

On the day of your abortion, you can take your tea or tincture in the morning. I would not recommend taking anything, but what the doctor gives you during the abortion. After your abortion, and if you are able to, you can take your tonic again.

You can continue taking your tonic, during your recovery days, and thereafter. You may choose to stop taking it when you feel close to your old self again. All the herbs I have mentioned above are safe to use long term. A few days after your abortion, you need to rest. You should allow yourself a couple of days off work, school and other engagements. You should be in a safe and comfortable place to rest. Surround yourself with books, music, movies, good food or whatever else you may think you may want during this time. It is important to plan for this before your abortion. Depending on how your body reacts to the abortion, you can take several different herbs to aid in minor difficulties that may arise. Women's physical responses vary immensely. Some women feel great; have minimal cramping, and bleeding. Other women may need to stay in bed or in their house for several days,



because of heavy cramping, bleeding and nausea. I do not recommend taking herbs, such as yeha mate (Ilex paraguensis), or Korean ginseng (Panax ginseng) to increase energy levels, as the focus should be on healthy recovery and not on getting back to school, or work, or going to that big party. Although, a few days recovery time is not possible for some women, (having children to take care of, not being able to get appropriate time off work etc...), please allow yourself as much time as possible for recovery, even if this means a few hours.

After the abortion, you may have cramping. Some women have almost none, and other women have severe cramping. If you experience cramping during your menstrual cycle, chances are that you will experience post-abortion cramping. I suggest that you prepare for this before the abortion also. I would recommend tinctures instead of teas for this, because they deliver faster. You may also not be able to get out of bed to make a tea, and wait for 20 minutes while it infuses, so tinctures are much more practical. Some herbal tinctures that I would recommend to reduce cramping are cramp bark (Viburnum opulus), black haw (Mitchella repens), valerian (Valeriana officinale), black cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa), blue cohosh (Caulophyllum thalictroides), Jamaican dogwood (Piscidia erythrina) and kava (Piper methysticum). All these plants have excellent muscle relaxant properties.

They stop the pain caused by contraction of muscles, but not the contractions themselves. Valerian root and kava, have the double action of being muscle relaxants and also changing the way you will perceive pain, by acting on various receptors in the brain. You can also use herbs that are painkillers. These have many actions in the body, ranging from blocking pain receptors, to depleting hormones involved in pain production, or action higher up in the brain to change the pain response. Herbs included in this category are wild lettuce (Lactuca virosa), California poppy (Eschscholzia californica), pasque flower (Anemone pulsatilla), and Jamaican dogwood. These herbs are available to the general public. If you want some stronger painkillers, you can go see a practicing herbalist who can prescribe you yellow jasmine (Gelsemium sempervirens), monkshood (Aconitum napellus) or henbane (Hyoscyamus niger). These herbs are potent painkillers; they also have a fine therapeutic window between treatment and toxicity. I do not recommend

-- travelling europe i carried our creation, the three of us there, what **are** the chances of that again?

-- after my abortion seeing so many babies, happy looking young mothers (that one pregnant with her third child, working on a university ~~master~~ so young, so together seeming) and i'm thinking maybe i should have been strong enough.

-- walking my dog around my neighborhood (suburban sidewalks suffocating me) i hold my belly , missing being pregnant, that feeling of being full and slightly heavy, trying to relate to those women when pregnant, 'just glow', even though i terminated

-- thinking a boy in my house got a girl pregnant, but i've never heard him talk about it

-- being at my grandma's in the czech republic and finally taking the test, laughing because i was using a cooking pot to collect my pee

-finally talking to that boy in my house, it was a hard conversation i could barely say what i wanted, later thought, so much easier with girls? those walls stand tall.

- my legs kicking, pulsing, twitching on the table i felt sucked dry

-the woman i've been talking to explains to well, we imbody all these emotions, it happens in our bodies, all our senses attuned to this action INSIDE, how can we expect those whose bodies have not endured to understand?

PIECES

OF

ME

BY

GABKA

-- a few years ago when my sister told me she was pregnant i thought, 'please god spare me from that'

--- agreeing with a friend when he calls me strong

--- coming home after my abortion, none of my roomates knowing, and me telling myself, 'o.k. act NORMAL'

--some days i want to go back there, BEING PREGNANT, i was carried in gentleness, in the clinic he held my hand tighter then i ever knew.



-- thinking i had it easy compared to the stories of my friends, those i've read.

--finding it easy to talk the facts with whoever wants to know, but oh that grief, that sadness i remember, so hard to say out loud.

-- the silly skirt they put me in, my eyes searching the pale blue ceiling through it all, celia the nurse, reminding me of photographs of zapatista women

--still i need to talk of it, begin those conversations, it feels good to open my mouth and say you know this happened, what is your story?



you making and using your own tinctures from these plants (they need precise extraction, so their strength is somewhat standard), also the maximum dosages of them vary, ranging from 0.5 ml a day to 2 ml a day. You will not find these in health food stores, or on the shelf of herb shops. You need to see a practitioner to get them, and they will tell you the proper ways to use them. Despite their toxicity, they are excellent herbs, and they work fast. Another herb that is an excellent pain killer and anti-spasmodic is marijuana (Cannabis sativa). You can use it the regular way, by smoking it. If you do not want to experience the psychoactive effects, you can also tincture the entire plant, and use that for pain relief.



Your post-abortion bleeding time may be prolonged, depending on how your body is reacting to the abortion. If you are bleeding longer than 3 or 4 days, I suggest adding some nettles or alfalfa to your herbal tonic, as they decrease the likelihood of developing anemia, due to blood loss. If you are soaking through more than 1 pad an hour, then you may be hemorrhaging. You can take a teaspoon of shepard's purse (Capsella bursa pastoris) or lady's mantle (Alchemilla vulgaris). These are meant to slow down or stop the hemorrhage, only until you can get to the hospital, or to see a doctor. There are many complications (perforated uterus, absence of clotting factors, drug reactions etc...) that can cause hemorrhage, and these acute situations are not to be home-treated with herbs. If you are experiencing any of the post abortion symptoms your health care worker has discussed with you, go see a doctor. Do not attempt to deal with them at home.

Psychologically, a woman's experience of abortion is unique to her. There is no way that you are expected to feel, or to react.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU OWN YOUR FEELINGS AND THAT YOU EXPERIENCE THEM. NEVER LET ANYONE TELL YOU THAT YOU ARE CRYING TOO MUCH, OR THAT YOU DON'T CARE WHAT'S HAPPENING BECAUSE YOU CAN LAUGH THE DAY AFTER YOUR ABORTION.

I suggest you go for the follow up at the clinic, and talk to the nurse about your feelings, birth control options, or whatever else is on your mind. Your friends are also a great resource, as they can provide you with the support that you may need. If you feel like you are taking too long to recover psychologically, or you feel like there are some other feelings you want to express, go see a counselor, even if it is months after your abortion.

THERE ARE NO TIME RESTRICTIONS FOR RECOVERY.

Some women spend a lifetime healing from this and working through every emotion.



Herbal medicine can play an important role in helping you recover

from abortion. If you want to make your own tinctures, please consult a book

on herbal medicine about proper tincture making. You can probably find

most of these herbs in herb shops, or you can mail-order them. If you want

lists of herb shops, and suppliers for your area, look in the phone book or

EMAIL ME AT:

herbalmedicine@earthlink.net

OR WRITE ME AT:

SARKA HALAS

P.O. BOX 64, STNC

MONTREAL, QUEBEC

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CANADA

new email:

lady.sarka@
hotmail.com

LADIES... OUR BODIES AS SLAUGHTERHOUSES?
i saw this article one day. i read it and couldn't move. i know if i researched abortion history i would find so many stories as this one. but here is one. a small dot on the timeline of abortion history. this history is now this little girl is still alive. one that is not so rare, one that is still so common. we must never assume we are free if our sisters are still dying. some days i feel defeated, some days i can arm my privilege and make it mean something. fight with what i have. read this and focus your rage.

9-year-old's abortion sparks fierce debate in Central America

Church, women's rights groups prepare to battle over abortion rights in Nicaragua

By T. CHRISTIAN MILLER

LOS ANGELES TIMES

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — She had been raped. She was pregnant. And she was dirt poor. But Rosa was 9. That gave her one more reason to want an abortion.

"I don't want to have to share my toys with another kid," she told a school newspaper reporter. "I take care of my toys."

So, a few days later, suffering vomiting and fainting, Rosa was taken to a hospital. Her doctors found a fetus in her womb. The girl was 9. The doctors decided to perform an abortion. But it was only the beginning of an uproar that signaled how Latin America, especially Central America, has become the focus of an international battle over abortion.

The dilemma has transfixed Nicaragua, a predominantly Roman Catholic nation where abortion is illegal. It is a country where the mother's life is at risk if she delays an abortion. Television stations have sponsored call-in programs, featuring outraged proponents and opponents of the abortion.

A panel of doctors concluded that either parent could be held responsible for the threat to Rosa's life, prompting the girl away for the secret procedure. The girl and her family were kept in a safe house until the nation's attorney general ruled the abortion legal.

The nation's family affairs minister called for Rosa to be taken away from her parents. The country's highest-ranking public health official is a doctor who has been vocal in his support of the Catholic Church's position that communication was automatic for anyone involved in the abortion — including Rosa and her family.

Latin America, a heavily Catholic region, has always had among the world's toughest laws governing abortion. All of its Spanish-speaking countries, with the exception of Cuba, prohibit elective abortion. Most of them allow the procedure when the mother's life is in danger, some in cases of rape or incest, and a few when the fetus has a severe health problem.

Women have a difficult time putting the limited opportunities into practice even in countries with more lax standards. Bolivia, where abortions are permitted

when a woman's mental health is threatened, has only registered one legal abortion in three decades.

The rise of newly democratic governments in the region allowed the Catholic Church to mount strong lobbying campaigns in the last few years to further tighten laws on elective abortion. El Salvador outlawed the procedure in 1998. Honduras recently increased its restrictions, forbidding that procedure.

The case of the 9-year-old girl in Nicaragua is part of an all-out battle to further restrict abortion. More than 100 churches will simultaneously show a graphic anti-abortion film to congregations later this month. In April, a march with 60,000 people is planned for Good Friday.

The effort is focused on the National Assembly, which is expected to vote on a referendum that has been called by the government. The referendum is over the question of whether to further penalize abortion. The idea is to convince lawmakers to change the law so that abortion would only be permitted when it occurs as a "consequence" of an operation to save a pregnant woman's life.

Rafael Cabrera, a gynecologist who heads Nicaragua's largest anti-abortion group, said Rosa would have been killed if she had not had the abortion. He said the girl was about a girl said to be the youngest mother ever in Nicaragua who gave birth in 1939 at age 5.

Women's rights groups have launched equally fierce campaigns to preserve existing abortion rights and, in a few cases, ease restrictions. In Mexico, for example, the rate of 13.5 abortions a year resulted in some states adding exceptions to abortion laws.

The groups note World Health Organization statistics showing that one-fifth of maternal deaths in Latin America are related to unsafe abortions, the highest of any region in the world. About 26 percent of all pregnancies in Latin America are estimated to be unintended.

Few of the groups involved, however, express hope of expanding women's ability to obtain abortions, citing the overwhelming reach and power of the Catholic Church. Instead, they concentrate on protecting the legal opportunities that exist.

"This has opened the door to a slaughterhouse," said Msgr. Jorge Solorzano, the country's second-ranking Catholic official.

Sorry i didn't reference the newspaper, it was some time in the month of April, 2003.

When I was fifteen
I was soiled by an anonymous boy
And vacuumed clean by another
Both wore costumes
One wore grey, one wore white
Both filled me with drugs
And I never found my words to ask
But anyway, I trusted
Both found the hole to insert their instrument into.

I still don't remember the name of that doctor
Who signed the form exempting me from parental permission

I still can't remember the face of that kind guidance
Councillor who drove me to Campbell River and back
Who tried to buy me lunch and endured my hatefilled
And fear-laden silence.

But I remember the two rooms
Where I was handed drugs
Two rooms where I fell asleep
And woke up with bloody thighs
One room was grey
One room was white

When I was fifteen I was soiled
By an anonymous boy, I was vacuumed clean.

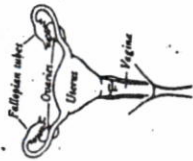
Name withheld by request.

herbal emmenagogues

about a month and a half ago, I used herbal emmenagogues to bring on my period when I strongly suspected I was pregnant. I wanted to share my experience with others about it, but my time I tried to write about it, I found myself totally de-personalizing the story, focusing instead on the political aspects of alternative health care, on what specific herbs and recipes I used, what books and zines I read, etc. But I was so really angry about the whole thing that I decided to write about it. I thought about what I really wanted to say, and I decided to write about it. I thought about what I really wanted to say, and I decided to write about it. I thought about what I really wanted to say, and I decided to write about it.

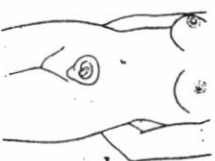
he had been in town for about a week, and I had been staying at his house. I remember thinking that he was a typical gastroenterologist, and how the room felt like a typical gastroenterologist's office. I remember thinking that he was a typical gastroenterologist, and how the room felt like a typical gastroenterologist's office. I remember thinking that he was a typical gastroenterologist, and how the room felt like a typical gastroenterologist's office.

two nights ago I stayed up all night. I was holding that bottle of hot water tightly against my belly, crying, shaking, waiting for blood. I thought about that boy for a while, and how at that moment I hated him because I felt so damn alone. But by that time he was on the other side of the country and there was nothing I could do, and besides, I liked the pretend strength in "I can take care of myself."



I hate this nervous feeling that has hijacked the pit of my stomach and I hate the taste of mouth-port tea when it's been four days and still no blood just dizzy bike rides and sleepless nights just an endless pattern of hearing from people and hope and no hope.

his boy asked
me if I could
bring him the other
one. He said he
could give me
the one I wanted.



First Trimester
1-3 months

I love how everything I need and then some, surprisingly enough, but I know stores like this don't exist in every city. It was a whole lot to think about. I go home and read more, everything I can get my hands on. I eat the treatments in a week and so I guess I can't breathe.

three

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

By, exclaim on a pregnant girl, 'oh fuck! I can't believe SHE got pregnant. Poor girl! I can't believe she'd be so dumb, hasn't she ever heard of birth control?' I know that I've thought that about girls I knew. The responsibility all immediately fell on the woman, and the blame was absolute. She had been bad and she was paying the price. I told myself that I would refuse guilt, but somehow it still snuck up on me and I felt bad, at fault and wholly responsible. And that pain was owed me for fucking up. And I deserved to be judged as harsh as we judge all those bad girls; teen moms, girls who have sex, girls who use the 'wrong' type of birth control, or none at all, girls who are too young, or too old, for having an abortion, or not having one. The reasons we judge continue and the view on girls doesn't change. We are loose, irresponsible, unthinking, oversexed, frigid and we all pay consequences in the end. We pity her no matter what decision she makes. There is so much negativity surrounding pregnant girls, so many stereotypes, and so much judgment thrown in her face. I wanted to write this to help break those patterns.

Silence breeds the fear, the stereotypes, and the miseducation. Silence deprives other women (and men) our knowledge and support. Abortion is not a black and white issue. And the feelings contained in it are always valid and real. So though my abortion was a personal event, and I'll talk about it when and how I choose, and this writing barley sums up the intense experience, I needed to write. To be able to say, this is me, this has happened to me, and I think about it each day. It hasn't damaged me, and I don't need pity. But I need people to understand, listen, and question themselves.

---it is marking me speaking

to me reminding me each day

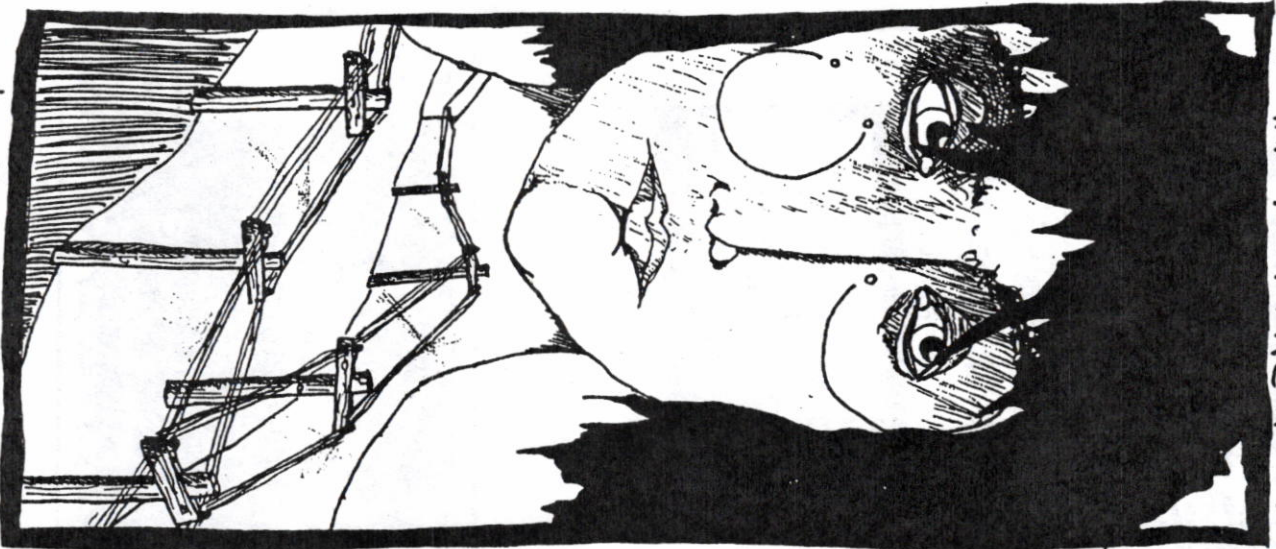
what I have gained and that

what I have lost---

originally written in the
second issue of the E. 2nd
Ave. house zine

-gabriela

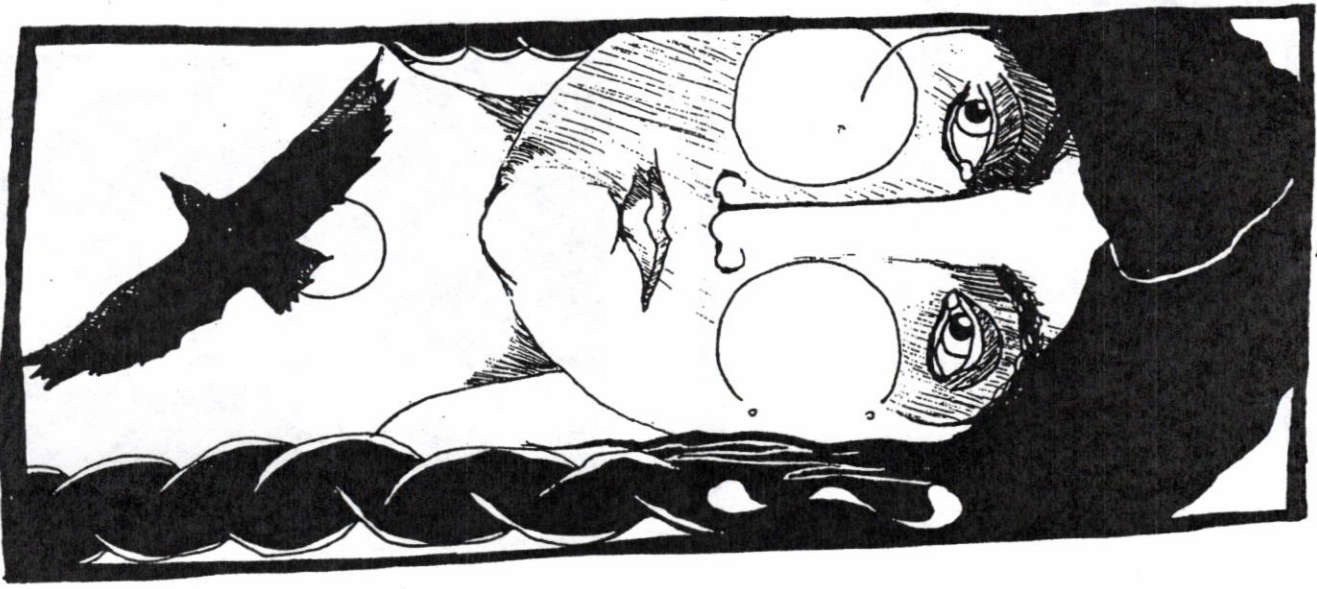
SHE HAD TELEPHONE WIRES



IN HER CHEST

AND

SHE



A RAVEN

Epitaphic Gratitude

Dear child, you've
mothered me. Quietly
teaching me to reach
inside, to feel
the life exerting,
asserting, emerging
within this vacant womb.
Your short life
delivering me
to this weathered cabin
in the woods, where
glowing warmth and amber
light, lead me
gracefully
home.

Danielle Arsenault

